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Mr Chairperson, Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen

Childhood holds the key to the development prospects of a nation in an increasingly globalized and competitive world. By realizing the rights of every child, societies are making the most important long-term investments to secure their future prosperity.

Investments in children and in future generations are a smart economic choice, especially when made at the right moment in a child's development, and targeting children that are most deprived. They lead to long-term returns and create enabling environments for sustained growth and shared prosperity.

Many countries in the region have harnessed the virtuous circle between investments in children, prosperous economies and cohesive societies. UNICEF calls on Member States to be active champions of child rights in the context of the financing for development negotiations.

Prioritizing investments for children and future generations and adopting more equitable spending must be the central principles of the financing strategies to attain the SDGs.

UNICEF proposes 4 priorities and targets that the international community should champion in the Addis Ababa outcome document. Proposals are based on reforms already undertaken by governments in some advanced and less advanced economies. As such, we have clear evidence that they are within practical reach of decision makers.

The first priority is to better target public expenditures to those children who need it most.

UNICEF urges governments to commit to: (1) prioritize spending in areas such as early childhood care and learning, primary education and health care where benefits for the most deprived children are known to be disproportionately larger; and (2) allocate a disproportionate share of public spending to children and communities with greater needs.

The second priority is to ensure adequate overall levels of spending on children.

Economic and social benefits of investing in children are well documented in education, health care, early childhood development, and social protection. Recent analysis further illustrates that investments in the cognitive development and nutrition of a child at the right moment, and protection of children from violence and abuse, result in savings in education and social protection expenditures, reduced crime and increased tax revenues.

UNICEF urges governments to commit to: (1) progressively mobilize additional resources for underfunded SDG priority areas with the greatest impacts for children, such as early childhood development, nutrition, or child protection; (2) identify and better exploit synergies across areas of SDG financing, such as climate change, education, and infrastructure; and (3) in times of economic contraction, protect spending that directly benefits children.

The third priority is to improve tracking of and reporting on child-related spending.

UNICEF urges governments to commit to: (1) scale up ongoing efforts to develop transparent information on child-related spending, including, for instance, the share of revenues and expenditures allocated to relevant age groups; and (2) document how much spending goes to groups or areas with higher incidence of child deprivation.

The fourth priority is to strengthen international collaboration to realize rights for all children everywhere.

UNICEF urges governments to commit to: (1) target ODA and concessional finance to countries where children face greater needs but which have lower revenue generation capacity; (2) maximize the impact of ODA by prioritizing social, economic and climate related investments with the greatest benefits for children; (3) encourage horizontal cooperation between countries on policies and investments for children; and (4) improve reporting on child-related ODA.

Mr Chairperson, Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen

I would like to conclude by encouraging governments from our region who have not yet done so, to join the Group of Friends of Children, co-chaired by Pakistan, Guatemala and Luxembourg. Your engagement during the financing for development negotiations in the coming months can make the strongest contribution to ensuring the inclusion of child-related targets and indicators in the SDG final framework, and to securing investments in children as the basis for sustainable development.